

Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program

Agricultural Marketing Service

Fiscal Year 2014 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-FSMIP-2014

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 16, 2014

Program Solicitation Information

Funding Opportunity Title: Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-FSMIP-2014

Announcement Type: Initial

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.156

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on June 16, 2014, through www.grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2014 Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) to competitively award grants to eligible applicants to explore new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the U.S. marketing system. Approximately \$1.1 million is available to fund applications under this solicitation.

This Notice identifies eligibility criteria for FSMIP projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a FSMIP grant.

HIGHLIGHTS and CHANGES for FY 2014 FSMIP

It is important that applicants read the entire document as there are some changes, new requirements, and new emphases for 2014. Below are the highlights and changes for 2014.

- In addition to the types of proposals authorized under FSMIP's enabling legislation, FSMIP encourages proposals that
 - Assess challenges and develop methods or practices that could assist local and regional producers in marketing agricultural products that meet the mandates of the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act, 21 U.S.C. 2201.
 - Have the potential to create wealth and economic opportunity in rural communities through research and studies on issues relating to marketing in local and regional food systems, and value-added agriculture.
 - o Contribute to the strategy of a designated Promise Zone.
- Applicants must quantify and discuss the potential economic impact of the project on agricultural producers and agribusinesses. An explanation should be provided for how the economic impact was derived.
- The maximum indirect cost rate that may be used to calculate indirect costs is the lesser
 of the indirect cost rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal agency, or 30 percent of
 the federal funds requested.
- Applicants must complete block 14 of the SF 424 (Areas Affected by Project) and include it as an attachment with the application package.
- FSMIP projects may be from one to two years in duration, but all grant agreements will be set up for two years and will carry the same starting and ending dates. Recipients may complete the project in less than two years.
- FSMIP has included specific instructions on how literature citations to support the Background and Justification are handled.
- Evaluation criteria used to score and rate proposals have been revised.
- FSMIP has issued clarification regarding the use of incentives to encourage participation of survey respondents and others who may be recruited to the study.

Several changes suggested by last year's expert reviewers have been adopted to help expedite the review process:

- All pages must be numbered, and applicants must include a Table of Contents.
- All components of the application must be submitted in one document except for the SF 424 and SF 424B which should be submitted separately.

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1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided under section 204(b) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627).

1.2 PURPOSE

The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) provides matching funds on a competitive basis to State Departments of Agriculture, State agricultural experiment stations, and other appropriate State agencies, all of which are collectively referenced throughout this RFA as "State agencies" to assist in exploring new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and to encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the U.S. marketing system. FSMIP funds a wide range of applied research projects that address barriers, challenges, and opportunities in marketing, transporting, and distributing U.S. food and agricultural products domestically and internationally.

Proposals may focus on addressing barriers, overcoming challenges or realizing opportunities manifesting at any stage of the marketing chain including direct, wholesale, and retail. Proposals must have a strong marketing focus, must involve research, and the primary beneficiaries must be agricultural producers and agribusinesses. Proposals that involve training or education programs must include a research component that tests the effects of the program on the marketing goals.

Proposals may involve small, medium or large scale agricultural entities but should benefit multiple producers or agribusinesses, whereas proposals that benefit one business or individual will not be considered. Proposals that address issues of importance at the State, multi-State, or national level are appropriate for FSMIP.

1.2.1 Eligible Agricultural Categories

Eligible agricultural categories include poultry, livestock, dairy, and poultry products, food, feed and fiber crops, fish and shellfish, horticulture, viticulture, apiary, and forest products, and processed or manufactured products derived from such commodities. Reflecting the growing diversity of U.S. agriculture, in recent years, FSMIP accepts proposals dealing with nutraceuticals, bioenergy, compost, agroforestry products, and products made from agricultural residue. To check on the eligibility of agricultural categories not listed, please contact the FSMIP Staff Officer.

1.2.2 Collaboration

Of particular interest are proposals that reflect a collaborative approach between the States, academia, the farm sector and other appropriate entities and stakeholders. FSMIP recognizes the synergies and improved outcomes that are attributable to such collaborations and encourages such partnerships.

1.2.3 Pilot Projects/Case Studies

FSMIP will also consider unique proposals on a smaller scale that may serve as pilot projects or case studies useful as models for others. Such proposals should include an objective to analyze opportunities and formulate recommendations with regard to how the project could be scaled up or expanded to other regions.

1.2.4 Economic Impact

All proposals must quantify and discuss the potential economic impact of the project on agricultural producers and agribusinesses. Impacts include, but are not limited to jobs, volume and value of sales or shipments, market share, and value of new markets and new products.

1.2.5 Project Topics

FSMIP's enabling legislation authorizes projects to:

- Determine the best methods for processing, preparing for market, packing, handling, transporting, storing, distributing, and marketing agricultural products.
- Determine the costs of marketing agricultural products in their various forms and through various channels.
- Assist in the development of more efficient marketing methods, practices and facilities to bring about more efficient and orderly marketing, and reduce the price spread between the producer and the consumer.
- Develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade and packaging in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices.
- Eliminate artificial barriers to the free movement of agricultural products in commercial channels.
- Foster new/expanded domestic/foreign markets and new/expanded uses of agricultural products.
- Collect and disseminate marketing information to anticipate and meet consumer requirements, maintain farm income, and balance production and utilization.

1.2.6 Priority Topics

In addition to the types of proposals authorized under FSMIP's enabling legislation, FSMIP encourages proposals that

- Assess challenges and develop methods or practices that could assist local and regional producers in marketing agricultural products that meet the mandates of the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act 21 U.S.C. 2201.
- Have the potential to create wealth and economic opportunity in rural communities through research and studies on issues relating to marketing in local and regional food systems, and value-added agriculture.
- Contribute to the strategy of a designated <u>Promise Zone</u>. Designated urban, rural, and tribal Promise Zones areas include the following:
 - San Antonio, TX (Eastside Neighborhood)
 - Los Angeles, CA (Neighborhoods of Pico Union, Westlake, Koreatown, Hollywood, and East Hollywood)
 - Philadelphia, PA (West Philadelphia)
 - Southeastern Kentucky (Kentucky Highlands, including the following counties: Bell, Harlan, Letcher, Perry, Leslie, Clay, Knox and part of Whitley County)
 - Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (entire territory excluding Hughes County and parts of Bryan, Pittsburg, and LeFlore counties)

1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS

1.3.1 State Agency Responsibilities

State Agencies bear the primary responsibility for developing proposals and overseeing funded projects. Proposals must be structured so that the State Agency maintains control of the project objectives, sets policy, and ensures that the project will be carried out in accordance with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. State Agencies are responsible for ensuring that sub recipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

State Agencies should ensure that proposals are appropriate for FSMIP by reviewing **1.2 PURPOSE**. Contact the FSMIP Staff Officer if there is any question about whether or not the proposal qualifies for FSMIP.

1.3.2 Outreach

State Agencies assume the lead role in FSMIP projects and use cooperative or contractual linkages as needed to carry out the proposed work. State Agencies are encouraged to reach out to potential project partners within their States including producer and commodity groups, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, and groups that represent American Indians and Alaska Natives, socially

disadvantaged producers, veterans, and <u>Promise Zone</u> partner organizations to engage them in developing proposals.

1.3.3 Multi-State Proposals

Multi-State proposals are encouraged. For such proposals, the State Agency that will assume the administrative and coordinating role should submit the application.

1.3.4 Previous and Similar Projects

If the proposal: (a) Builds on a project funded by the AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the AMS Farmers Market Promotion Program, or another USDA grant program; (b) Is part of a larger project; (c) Builds on a previously funded FSMIP project; or (d) Is similar to or replicates previous FSMIP-funded work done in another State or under another project, an explanation must be included in the project Narrative that explains how the proposal relates to, and is distinct from, such work.

A follow-up proposal is allowed only after the original FSMIP project has been completed, and the final report on the original FSMIP project has been submitted to and accepted by FSMIP. A follow-up proposal to an in-progress FSMIP project is not allowed. It is also FSMIP's policy not to fund more than three successive projects on the same topic submitted by the same State Agency and/or its partners.

1.3.5 Proposals Involving Foreign Market Development or Foreign Travel

If a proposal involves foreign market development, determine first if the project is more appropriate for grant programs administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) or for funding through the State-Regional Trade Groups. FSMIP recommends that applicants search the <u>FAS database of GAIN reports</u> to ensure that proposals will not duplicate existing information. Any request for funds to conduct foreign travel must be directly related to the project objectives.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

FSMIP will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful FSMIP applications.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in 5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Approximately \$1.1 million will be available to fund FSMIP applications in fiscal year 2014.

2.4 GRANT PERIOD DURATION

FSMIP projects must be completed within two years. The grant agreement with the successful applicant will be set up for two years, although it is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled ending date. The grant period start date and end date on Block 17 on the SF-424 should be September 30, 2014, and September 29, 2016, respectively.

2.5 AWARD SIZE

Grants typically average about \$60,000 each. In recent years, grants have ranged from \$25,000 to \$135,000.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible grant applicants ("State agencies") are State departments of agriculture, State agricultural experiment stations, and other appropriate State agencies from the 50 States, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. The term "other appropriate State Agency" means a State university, a State college, or a State government entity such as a State department of forestry, natural resources, or energy. The terms State university and State college include land-grant universities and colleges established under the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, 7 U.S.C. sections 301 et seq and 321 et seq, respectively, and tribal colleges and universities that became land-grant institutions in 1994, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act. Other organizations referenced in 1.3.2 may apply to FSMIP through and in partnership with eligible applicants. In such a case, the eligible applicant would be responsible for the success for the grant project and appropriate use of the grant funds.

3.2 BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE INDIVIDUAL OR AGRIBUSINESS

FSMIP projects should benefit multiple producers or agribusinesses. FSMIP will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit only one individual or one agribusiness.

3.3 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

FSMIP grants must be matched \$1-for-\$1 with cash and/or with properly-valued, in-kind non-Federal resources. Examples of matching resources commonly used in FSMIP projects include cash, State appropriated funds, student tuition, partner's time, meeting facilities if they would otherwise have to be rented, and travel expenses associated with the project. Program income cannot be contributed as a match. Applicants should review the applicable Federal regulations and contact FSMIP if there are any questions about what constitutes a legitimate match.

All matching contributions must be committed or in place when the proposal is submitted to FSMIP. Non-Federal grant funds that are expected or anticipated to be awarded by the time the project commences cannot be counted toward the matching requirement. The time of unspecified individuals or groups to participate is not an acceptable match. For example, time and travel expenses of producers who will attend training or conferences are not an acceptable match.

The State Agency must obtain, and submit with the application, written verification of commitment from any third party who will contribute cash and/or in-kind matching resources to the project. Such written verification is not required of the State Agency itself because the signature of the State Agency representative on the SF 424 Federal application form affirms the availability of the matching resources the State Agency brings to the project.

Bringing more than the required \$1-for-\$1 match will not convey any advantage to the application in terms of evaluation and scoring during the review process.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 REQUESTING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE

FSMIP posts a synopsis of each new funding opportunity at <u>Grants.gov</u>. Applicants may search for the FSMIP funding opportunity using the FSMIP CFDA number 10.156, or the FSMIP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-FSMIP-2014." The synopsis includes a link on the program website at http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FSMIP. In addition, FSMIP prepares a press release that is disseminated through the AMS Public Affairs Office and posted at the AMS and FSMIP websites.

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Eligible entities who wish to submit a FSMIP application must submit the following components and associated attachments via Grants.gov.

4.2.1 SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance (Required)

The SF 424 is available to applicants when accessing the FSMIP opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks are either self-explanatory or explained in the instructions. The following is relevant information for specific blocks on the SF 424:

#8d. Address – street address and 9-digit zip code <u>as it appears in SAM</u> (see **6.3.3**). A Post Office Box is not acceptable.

#10. Name of Federal Agency – USDA/AMS

#11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number - 10.156

#12. Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-FSMIP-2014

Title - Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program

#14. Areas Affected by Project - *Must be completed and submitted as an attachment.*

#15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:

Provide only the project title, not to exceed 10 words

- #17. Proposed Project:
 - a. Start Date: September 30, 2014
- b. End Date: September 29, 2016 (all agreements will be for 2 years but applicant may finish early)
- #18. Estimated Funding (\$):
 - a. Federal Total FSMIP funds requested
 - b. Applicant *State Agency match*
 - c. State match from other State Agency (ies) or institution (s), if applicable
 - d. Local match from local governments (examples: county, municipality), if applicable
 - e. Other match from non-government sources (examples: non-profits, commodity or trade associations, producer groups), if applicable
- #19. Executive Order 12372: *consult the following website to determine if this is applicable in your State*: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants-spoc.

4.2.2 SF 424B Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (Required)

The SF 424B is available to applicants when accessing the FSMIP opportunity at Grants.gov. This form must be signed by the authorized certifying official.

4.2.3 Application Package (Required)

To ensure a fair and equitable competition, the required format is a single-spaced 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Number the pages in the right hand bottom corner. The Narrative may be in Word (.doc, .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), but whichever format is used, the cut/paste function must be operational.

COVER PAGE

The Cover Page must be included at the beginning of the application package, and include:

- Proposal Title of no more than 10 words
- The name of the applicant
- The names and contact information of the project leader, other principal partners, as well as the university grants office and financial office, as applicable

TABLE OF CONTENTS

All pages should be numbered. The Table of Contents indicates the page number for all required sections of the application as well as for any attachments.

ABSTRACT

The Abstract is a concise, stand-alone description of and justification for the project. The maximum length is 250 words.

NARRATIVE (Pages 1-10) and REFERENCES

The Narrative must include the following sections in the order they appear below. All sections of the Narrative must be in a paragraph format. Do not present or combine sections into a spreadsheet or table.

(1) Background and Justification

Clearly identify the marketing issue, problem, barrier, challenge or opportunity to be addressed and explain why the proposal is important and timely. Articulate the research question to be answered by the project or provide a concise problem statement. Provide a literature review sufficient to demonstrate the current state of knowledge about the topic and how the proposed work builds on it or addresses any gaps. See (7) References for instructions on how to handle literature citations.

Quantify and discuss the potential economic impact of the project on agricultural producers and agribusinesses. Impacts include, but are not limited to jobs, volume and value of sales or shipments, market share, and value of new markets and new products.

Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the problem, and the number of agricultural producers or agribusinesses affected. Explain who will benefit and how they will benefit from the project.

If the proposal:

- Builds on a project funded by the AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, the AMS Farmers Market Promotion Program, or another USDA grant program, briefly describe what has been accomplished already, how the proposal is distinct from the previous work, and how the proposal furthers the ultimate goals of the project.
- Is part of a larger non-FSMIP project, briefly describe how the proposal fits into the larger project and how it is distinct from other aspects of the larger project.
- Is a follow-up to a previously completed FSMIP project, briefly describe what
 has been accomplished already, how the FSMIP proposal is distinct from the
 previous project, and how the proposal advances the overall project goals.

- Is similar to or replicates previous FSMIP-funded work done in another State
 or under another project, describe how the proposal is distinct from such
 work, and indicate briefly how it will add to the general body of knowledge on
 this topic. A search function for FSMIP final reports is available at
 http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FSMIP.
- Involves foreign market development, briefly describe efforts taken to ensure this proposal does not duplicate publically available reports or data, and describe how it will fill any data gaps.
- Involves a <u>Promise Zone</u> implementation partner, discuss the role and relevance of the Promise Zone implementation partner, and the impact of the Promise Zone strategy on the goals, purposes, and outcomes of the project. Evidence of the partnership agreement with the Promise Zone Lead Applicant in the form of a letter must be included in the grant application.

(2) Other Grant Programs

Indicate if the proposal has been or will be submitted to another Federal grant program, and if so, please identify that grant program. If the proposal is selected for funding by another grant program after the proposal is submitted to FSMIP, please inform FSMIP as soon as possible.

(3) Goal(s), Objectives and Work Plan

Describe the overall goal(s) in one or two sentences. List and describe the proposal objectives. Explain how each objective will be accomplished and by whom. Also include the expected completion date for each objective and indicate the major milestones of the project.

If the proposal involves a survey, briefly discuss the nature of the questions that will be asked, the methodology to be used for data collection and analysis, and the population to be surveyed. It is not required, but if it is available, include a draft survey as an attachment. A draft survey does not count toward the 10-page Narrative maximum. Attach it after the REFERENCES (see (7) below).

(4) Project Evaluation, Outputs and Expected Outcomes

Describe what the project is expected to accomplish, proposed beneficiaries, and how it will be evaluated while in progress and upon conclusion. Describe outputs that explain who the target audience is and what activities are to be completed. Describe expected measureable outcomes that explain what knowledge may be gained or what actions may be implemented as a result of the project. Include at least one quantitative metric that will be reported at the beginning and the end of the project to demonstrate impact.

(5) Project Deliverables

List any expected deliverables that will result from the project in addition to the required final report. Examples of project deliverables include professional journal or farm press articles, Extension bulletins, and manuals.

(6) Outreach Plan

Describe how you will disseminate the project results to the target audience, stakeholders and other interested parties beyond those directly served by the project. Examples of such activities include presentations at professional conferences or producer meetings, publication of articles in professional journals or the agricultural press, educational brochures, slides, presentations, survey instruments, and websites. Web pages devoted to the project should also include this information in a prominent location. All materials must be made available electronically and disseminated via appropriate websites.

(7) References

Do not use footnotes. Cite the literature reference in the text and attach a separate page with the detailed literature citations called References. Reference pages do not count toward the 10-page Narrative limit.

(8) Draft Survey

If the project includes a survey, attach a draft of the survey to the application package if it is available. The Survey pages do not count toward the 10-page Narrative limit. If awarded, the performing organization is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of any human subject involved in NIFA sponsored research and related activities. If a research project protocol involves the use of human subjects, the institution agrees to comply with the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) regulations on the protection of human subjects as set forth in 45 CFR part 46, (formally adopted as the 'Common Rule'), and USDA regulations set forth in 7 CFR part 1c.

BUDGET SPREADSHEET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

The Budget Spreadsheet should show the relevant expenditure categories in the far left column and, proceeding across the page, there should be a column showing the dollar amount of FSMIP funds requested and separate columns showing the dollar amount for each of the entities that will provide matching resources. For 2-year projects, provide separate Year 1, Year 2, and cumulative budgets.

The Budget Narrative should explain how the dollar amounts for each category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what they cover. Following is information on some of the more common expenditures associated with FSMIP projects.

<u>Personnel</u> – Show hourly rates and estimated number of hours, FTEs or percent of time to be spent on the project, and describe the role and responsibilities of each party. If a third party will be hired after the grant is awarded but has not yet been identified, provide a brief description of the qualifications to be sought and the type of wages to be paid hourly, salaried, or graduate assistantship. Rates should be reasonable and consistent with locality pay for similar jobs.

<u>Travel</u> – Indicate what the travel includes (mode of travel, how many people, how many days, destination, lodging, meals, etc. as applicable) and how it relates to the project goals.

<u>Contracts</u> – Indicate if the expense represents a flat fee for services or an hourly rate. Indicate the actual or estimated hourly rate to be applied. List general categories of items the contract covers such as professional services, travel, lodging, administrative expenses, etc. Rates should be reasonable and consistent with locality pay for similar jobs. Hourly rates that exceed the salary of a GS-14 step 10 federal employee in your area must be justified.

<u>Indirect Cost</u> – Indicate the rate used to calculate the indirect cost and the source of the rate. The indirect cost rate can be applied to the total project cost (grant plus match). The maximum rate that may be used to calculate indirect costs is the lesser of the indirect cost rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal agency or 30 percent of total federal funds requested.

<u>Administrative Costs</u> - Administrative costs directly attributable to the project may be charged, on a shared basis, to both the Federal and matching funds allocated to the project or they may be credited entirely toward the matching requirement.

OTHER REQUIRED ELEMENTS

(1) Personnel Qualifications

Provide a one- to two-page resume of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigators and for each of the other major project participants. Longer resumes will be disregarded.

(2) **Debarment and Suspension Verification of Sub Recipients and Contractors**Applicants must verify that any sub recipient or contractor named in the application is not suspended or debarred or otherwise excluded from eligibility to receive grant funds. Applicants should provide a statement such as the following:

I affirm that on <<date>> I checked the Federal website www.sam.qov and have determined that <<name of sub recipient/contractor>> is not suspended or debarred or otherwise excluded from eligibility to receive grant funds.

If the sub recipient or contractor is not currently registered with SAM, the applicant should strongly advise them to register because their status must be verified as a condition for awarding grant funds. If this is the case, provide a statement such as the following:

<< Name of sub recipient/contractor>> is not yet registered with SAM, but they have been advised to do so as a condition for participating in this project.

Before engaging them with the project, we will determine their status with regard to suspension and debarment.

If the sub recipient or contractor has not yet been identified, provide a statement such as the following:

The sub recipient/contractor has not yet been identified. Before considering them as eligible to work on the project, any prospective sub recipient or contractor must register with SAM. Before engaging them with the project, we will determine their status with regard to suspension and debarment.

- (3) Letters from Third Parties who will Contribute Matching Resources
 Written verification of commitment from each third party who will contribute
 cash and/or in-kind matching non-Federal resources to the project is required.
 Acceptable written verification is in the form of a letter on organization
 letterhead, and may be addressed either to the State Agency or to the FSMIP Staff
 Officer. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Do not
 send original letters. Unsigned letters and email messages in lieu of a letter will
 not be accepted. Clearly indicate at the top of the letter that it is a MATCH letter.
 Letters of verification must include:
 - Organization name, name and title of letter writer, address, telephone number and email address.
 - Project title and a reference to FY 2014 FSMIP.
 - Total dollar amount of cash contribution and/or a description of the in-kind contribution. For example, if the in-kind contribution is personnel time, include name, title, total dollar amount and an indication of number of hours, percent of salary or FTEs the dollar amount represents.

(4) Letter(s) of Support from Stakeholders or Beneficiaries

At least one, but no more than three, letters of support from stakeholders or beneficiaries detailing the expected benefits of the project to the group is required. A third party that contributes resources to the project may write a letter of support, but that letter must be separate from the MATCH letter discussed in item (3). Letters of support should be on letterhead and may be addressed either

to the State Agency or to the FSMIP Staff Officer. Letters of support must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Do not send original letters. Unsigned letters and email messages in lieu of letters will not be accepted. Form letters are discouraged. Clearly indicate at the top of the letter that it is a SUPPORT letter. Congressional letters of support do not meet this requirement.

- (5) Letter from a <u>Promise Zone</u> Implementation Partner, if Applicable
 If the proposal involves a Promise Zone Implementation partner, a letter from this
 entity must accompany the proposal at the time of application. The letter should
 affirm the partnership and describe how the proposal meets the goals of the
 Promise Zone initiative.
- (6) Areas Affected by Project (Cities, counties, States, etc.)
 Complete Block 14 on the SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance and submit as a separate attachment with the application.

4.3 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

All of the following components of the application are required and must be submitted together via Grants.gov no later than the application deadline. *COMBINE AND SUBMIT ITEMS (2) THROUGH (7) IN ONE FILE IN THE ORDER THEY APPEAR BELOW. Submit the SF 424 and 424B as separate attachments.*

- (1) Federal Application Forms
 - SF 424 Application for Federal Assistance
 - SF 424B Assurances Non-Construction Programs
- (2) Cover Page
- (3) Table of Contents
- (4) Abstract
- (5) 10-page Narrative plus References
- (6) Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative
- (7) Other Required Elements
 - Personnel Qualifications
 - Statement Regarding Debarment and Suspension Verification of Sub Recipients and Contractors
 - Letters from Third Parties who will Contribute Matching Resources
 - 1-3 Letters of Support from Stakeholders or Beneficiaries
 - Letter from Promise Zone implementation partner, if applicable
 - Areas Affected by Project (attachment from Block 14 of the SF 424)

4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

The deadline for submitting FY 2014 applications is 11:59 pm Eastern Time, June 16, 2014. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submitting them to Grants.gov. It

may take more than one try before your application is successfully submitted so plan ahead to leave enough time for the application process. The application will meet the deadline if it is validated by Grants.gov no later than 11:59 pm EDT on June 16, 2014.

4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This initiative is subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372.

4.6 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

All expenditures and accounting must be completed in accordance with applicable parts of 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016 and 3019; applicable Federal Cost Principles; and with successive published regulations. Following is information on restrictions in common categories of FSMIP proposal budgets:

4.6.1 Advertising and Promotion

FSMIP will not approve the use of grant funds for the following activities:

- Product advertising through any media, either directly or indirectly, through an advertising agency or other firm.
- General publicity or information programs designed to build the image of the State's agriculture, State Department of Agriculture, or other State Agency.
- Costs associated with County and State fair exhibits, or promotion of commodity months or weeks.
- Purchase of products or samples of products to give away to the public.
 However, products or samples may be purchased with grant funds or brought as a match if they are used in a study that assesses acceptance by the target audience, or has a similar evaluative objective.
- Promotional items such as point-of-sale materials, promotional kits, billboard space, signs or streamers, automobile stickers, table tents, and place mats, or promotional gift items of a personal nature.
- Expenses relating to domestic or foreign trade shows except educational programs or technical seminars conducted to educate potential buyers about the properties, characteristics or uses of an agricultural commodity or product.

4.6.2 Incentives for Study Participants and Survey Respondents

FSMIP funds may be used to provide cash, coupons, vouchers or other appropriate incentives to recruit target entities to participate in the research project, such as to complete a survey or participate in a focus group. All other uses of coupons and vouchers

are not allowed. The amount and type of the incentive should be reasonable and appropriate, and is subject to approval by FSMIP.

4.6.3 Equipment and Facilities

FSMIP will not approve the use of grant funds for the construction of facilities or the acquisition of land. Equipment rental costs may be charged to the project account. Grant funds may be used to rent a building or room and to purchase supplies and other materials, however, where appropriate, FSMIP encourages the use of technologies such as webinars, teleconferencing, or videoconferencing as an alternative to renting a building or a room. If renting a building or a room is necessary, the most cost-effective facilities such as State government conference rooms should be utilized.

4.6.4 Salary and Travel

FSMIP funds can be used to pay salary and travel of individuals for activities directly related to the project objectives. All travel expenses associated with FSMIP projects must follow Federal travel regulations (41 CFR Chapters 300 through 304) unless State travel requirements are in place. If alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly, they should be utilized as an alternative to travel.

4.6.5 Printing and Publications

Grant funds may be used to pay the cost of preparing informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and publications relating to the project, however the printing of hard copies is discouraged.

4.6.6 Conferences/Workshops

FSMIP will not fund a project that consists of only a conference, but a conference may be part of a larger project. The applicant should clearly indicate the purpose and target audience for any conference or workshop, and explain how the activity will be paid for. Also indicate if registration fees will be collected and if so, show the fees as program income on the Budget Spreadsheet and provide an explanation in the Budget Narrative. If funds are requested to pay for food or refreshments, provide an estimate of the cost per person.

4.6.7 Operation of a Competitive Sub Grant Program

Using FSMIP funds to conduct a competitive sub grant program is prohibited.

4.6.8 Administrative Costs

Administrative costs directly attributable to the project may be charged, on a shared basis, to both the Federal and matching funds allocated to the project or they may be credited entirely toward the matching requirement.

4.6.9 Indirect Costs

FSMIP retains the long-held policy of prohibiting use of grant funds to pay overhead or indirect costs. It is permissible, however, for the State Agency to include such costs as part of the matching requirement, provided that the rates are established in accordance with appropriate cost principles for Federal grant programs. The indirect cost rate can be applied to the total project cost (grant plus match). The maximum rate that may be used to calculate indirect costs is the lesser of the indirect cost rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal agency, or 30 percent of the federal funds requested.

4.6.10 Political Activity

Provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C., sections 1501-1508 and 7324-7328), which limit the political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds, apply to FSMIP projects.

4.6.11 Tuition

FSMIP funds cannot be used to pay tuition of college or university students but tuition may be brought as part of the match.

4.6.12 Program Income

Program income is gross income earned by a recipient resulting from activities supported by a grant. It includes income in the form of fees for services performed during the grant period, real property, usage or rental fees, or patent or copyright royalties. Program income cannot be used to meet the matching requirement.

FSMIP projects may involve program income such as registration fees for a conference held under a FSMIP project. Federal regulations require that the total grant award be reduced by an amount equal to the program income unless written permission is obtained from the grant agency. Acceptable uses of program income that FSMIP may approve include: (a) Expanding the project or program; (b) Continuing the project or program after the grant or sub grant support ends; (c) Supporting other projects or programs that further the broad objectives of FSMIP; or (d) Obtaining equipment or other assets needed for the project or program or for other activities that further FSMIP's objectives.

4.7 OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

FSMIP requires applicants to submit applications electronically through the central Federal grants website, www.grants.gov instead of mailing hard copy documents.

For information on how to apply electronically, consult the www.grants.gov <u>Get</u> <u>Registered</u> webpage. Applicants experiencing problems in electronic preparation or submission of documentation should contact <u>www.grants.gov</u>, the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726, or visit their <u>Troubleshooting Tips</u> webpage for troubleshooting tips. The hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Eastern Time; and they are closed on Federal Holidays.

Grants.gov will send the following communications to applicants:

- 1. <u>Submission Receipt Email (with "Track My Application" link)</u>: Within two business days after the application package has been received by Grants.gov, applicants will receive a submission receipt email which indicates that the submission has entered the Grants.gov system and is ready for validation. This email contains a tracking number for use while tracking the status of the submission as well as a "Track My Application" link, to use to see the progress of the submission.
- 2. <u>Submission Validation (or Rejection with Errors)</u>: Grants.gov checks for technical errors within the submitted application package, but it does not review application content for award determination. After applicants receive the submission receipt email, the next email will be a message either validating the submitted application package, or rejecting the submitted application package with errors. If an applicant does not receive both a receipt confirmation AND either a validation confirmation or a rejection email message within two business days, Grants.gov should be contacted as soon as possible.
- 3. <u>Grantor Agency Retrieval Email:</u> Once the application package has passed validation, it is delivered to FSMIP. After FSMIP confirms receipt of the application, a third email will be sent from Grants.gov.

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PHASE I: INITIAL SCREENING

Applications submitted to FSMIP will be evaluated in a three part review process. First, each application will be screened by FSMIP staff to determine if the applicant is an eligible entity, that all required components of the application have been submitted, and that the budget meets the \$1 for \$1 match. FSMIP will also ensure that the topic of the application is generally within the FSMIP program scope. Applicants will receive an email message from FSMIP once the initial screening is complete. Applications that pass Phase I will proceed to Phase II: Technical Review.

5.2 PHASE II: TECHNICAL REVIEW

Proposals are reviewed and evaluated by a team of subject-matter specialists using instructions prepared by FSMIP in consultation with AMS officials. Individual reviewers evaluate and score their assigned proposals and then confer with other team members to derive a consensus score which serves as the basis for awarding and allocating FSMIP grant funds. The consensus review focuses on strengths, weaknesses and suggestions which are shared with unsuccessful applicants after the awards have been announced.

Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria listed below. The text under each heading is provided to help applicants understand generally what aspects of their proposals will be evaluated, but is not meant to be a checklist or to indicate how scores within the individual evaluation categories will be weighted.

Proposals that address priority areas, including Promise Zone projects, will be evaluated on the criteria listed below in competition with all other proposals. Five percent of FSMIP funds will be reserved for priority projects and will be awarded to such projects provided they score among the higher ranked proposals.

- (1) OBJECTIVES (25 points) the proposal is well-justified, addresses an important marketing barrier, challenge or opportunity, and contains a problem statement or clearly frames the issue to be studied; the literature review supports the need for research; and aligns well with FSMIP's legislative and program goals.
- (2) APPROACH (25 points) the goals, objectives, and work plan are clear, appropriate, and logical; personnel demonstrate appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience necessary to conduct the research; research methodology is described and appropriate to answer research questions; and all budget items, both grant and match, are allowable, reasonable and clearly described.
- (3) IMPACT (30 points) the proposal describes the potential impact it will have on target producers and agribusinesses, and the potential for the proposal to provide new knowledge and lessons learned that could be applied in other States or regions of the country; estimated economic impact is described and supported by relevant data. For small-scale or pilot proposals, the proposal includes recommendations as to how the project could be scaled up or expanded to other States or regions. The proposal includes at least one quantitative metric to demonstrate impact.
- (4) DELIVERABLES AND OUTREACH (20 points) the proposal describes deliverables attributable to the project in addition to the final report; and outlines a plan to disseminate project results electronically and in person to the target audience, stakeholders, and interested parties beyond those directly served by the project.

5.3 PHASE III: ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Applications that qualify for Phase III of the review process will be evaluated to ensure the application is consistent with the appropriate *Federal Assistance Regulations* and costs within the application are necessary, allowable, and reasonable. Grants will be awarded at or close to the requested amount, or at a reduced level if mutually agreed upon during the negotiation phase of the application review.

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

For the remainder of this document, the term "recipient" refers to a State Agency that has been awarded a FSMIP grant. The term "sub recipient" refers to a third party who will receive grant funds in the course of carrying out the project.

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the grant awards, FSMIP will prepare and send grant agreements to recipients for signature by the appropriate official. Grant agreements consist of a 1-page Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) that will be signed by AMS and the recipient, plus a separate document containing detailed grant terms and conditions.

The Grant Agreement sets forth pertinent information about the grant, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Federal Agreement Identification Number (FAIN) or "agreement number;"
- Statutory authority for the award and any applicable program regulations;
- Name of Recipient organization;
- Name of the Recipient Project Coordinator;
- Approved period of performance start and end dates;
- Amount of Federal funds authorized for obligation by the recipient;
- Amount of matching resources brought to the project by the recipient and partners;
- Name of the Federal Agency Project Manager; and
- Applicable terms and conditions of award, by either reference or inclusion.

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by FSMIP via email as soon as possible after the awards are announced to inform them of the results. FSMIP will email unsuccessful applicants a copy of the consensus review results for their proposal.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

6.3.1 USDA Administrative Requirements

Awards issued under this announcement are subject to USDA Administrative requirements and Cost Principles of 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016 (Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State, Local, and Tribal Governments), and 3019 (Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations) and the FSMIP General Terms and Conditions of Award. An application funded with the release of Federal funds through a grant award does not constitute, or imply, compliance with Federal regulations. Recipients and sub recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable Federal regulations.

6.3.2 Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number

Recipients must ensure that it and its sub recipients have a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number at the time of application. A DUNS number is a unique number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to identify organizations. A DUNS number is required for every application. Potential applicants and sub applicants may acquire a DUNS number at no cost online at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform. To acquire a DUNS number by phone, contact the D&B Government Customer Response Center:

U.S. and U.S. Virgin Islands: 1-866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 1-800-234-3867 (Select option 2, then option 1)

Monday – Friday 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., CST

6.3.3 System for Award Management

The System for Award Management (SAM) has replaced the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) as the central government repository for organizations working with the Federal government. To receive an award under FSMIP, applicants are required to register with SAM and, in doing so, to designate an e-Business Point of Contact (e-Business POC). SAM registration must be updated annually and be active and maintained with current information at all times during which the recipient has an active award or an application under consideration.

The e-Business POC authorizes individuals to submit grant and cooperative agreement applications on behalf of the organization and creates a special password called a Marketing Partner ID Number (M-PIN) to verify individuals authorized to submit grant applications for the organization.

Organizations that need to register in SAM for the first time or need to update their SAM registration will visit https://www.sam.gov/. Questions about SAM may be directed to askSAM@gsa.gov.

6.3.4 Sub award and Executive Reporting

To comply with the Federal Funding and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) and <u>2 CFR part 170</u>, Reporting Sub award and Executive Compensation Information, recipients must register with the FSRS database and report the required data on their first tier sub recipients. See <u>Appendix A to part 170 – Award Term</u> for Reporting Sub awards and Executive Compensation requirements.

6.3.5 Debarment and Suspension

Regulations published in <u>2 CFR part 180</u>, as adopted and supplemented by USDA at <u>2 CFR part 417</u>; describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements for non-procurement programs and activities. "Non-procurement" transactions include, among other things, grant agreements. FSMIP implements these regulations as a term and condition of award. Recipients must check the System for Award Management

located at https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/ prior to entering into a "lower-tier" transaction. "Lower tier" transactions include contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (where the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed \$25,000) and all sub grants.

SAM is a centrally maintained government-wide database that includes the names of organizations and individuals that have been debarred, suspended, declared ineligible, or been voluntarily excluded; the reasons for that status; and the duration of that status. Search exclusion records on SAM at www.sam.gov to identify those parties excluded from receiving federal funds. Recipients must document the results of the search and must disclose unfavorable information to FSMIP before executing a contract. FSMIP will consider the information as part of the determination of whether the recipient may award funds to that particular sub recipient or contractor.

6.3.6 Delinquency on Federal Debt

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States, and has a judgment lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a Federal grant. Applicants are required to indicate in their applications (on the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance") if they are delinquent on any Federal debt. If the applicant discloses a delinquency, FSMIP may not award the grant until the debt is satisfied or satisfactory arrangements are made with the agency to which the debt is owed.

Anyone who has been judged to be in default on a Federal debt and who has had a judgment lien filed against him or her should not be listed as a participant in an application for a FSMIP grant until the judgment is paid in full or is otherwise satisfied. No funds may be rebudgeted following an award to pay such an individual. The Federal Agency will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

6.4 ACCEPTANCE OF AN AWARD

A signature by an authorized representative of the recipient on the Grant Agreement constitutes acceptance of an award and its associated terms and conditions. FSMIP must receive a scanned or faxed copy of the signed Grant Agreement. If a recipient cannot accept the award, including the legal obligation to perform in accordance with award terms and conditions, the recipient should notify FSMIP immediately upon receipt of the Grant Agreement. Once the recipient accepts the award, the contents of the Grant Agreement are binding on the recipient.

6.5 PREAWARD COSTS

The FY 2014 grant period begins September 30, 2014, and ends September 29, 2016. If the project must begin before the official September 30 start date, the recipient should contact FSMIP upon notification of the award for approval to begin work on the project. Written approval from FSMIP to begin the project before September 30, 2014, ensures that the recipient will be reimbursed for any pre-award costs incurred, and that any

matching resources expended during the pre-award period count toward the \$1-to-\$1 matching requirement.

6.6 POST AWARD MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

6.6.1 Post Award Management

Recipients are responsible for monitoring the performance of all project activities, ensuring that the work is completed within the required time frame, maintaining control of the project's objectives, and setting policy for all aspects of the project. Following are some of the specific responsibilities:

- Serve as the contact for FSMIP, sub recipients and other project partners about all grant and project matters. Sub recipients and partners should be instructed to communicate directly with the recipient, not with FSMIP, on all matters relating to the project.
- Contact FSMIP immediately if problems arise that will interfere with or delay the project.
- Inform FSMIP immediately if the project contact changes and provide the name, title, telephone number and email address for the new project contact.
- Ensure that both FSMIP funds and matching funds are used only for activities outlined in the approved project and work plan. Use of grant and matching funds must conform to the budget submitted with the application as accepted or as modified by mutual consent before the proposal was approved for funding. However, once a project is underway, recipients may shift expenditures from any one cost category or project element to another without obtaining prior approval from FSMIP, provided that the budget for cost categories or project elements is not increased or decreased by more than 20 percent of the total FSMIP grant amount.
- Instruct sub recipients and partners that will contribute matching resources on how to document their work on the project following proper accounting procedures. Records of receipts and expenditures of Federal funds, matching funds and in-kind resources must be identifiable within the recipient's accounting system. Inform sub recipients and partners that all records relating to the grant must be retained for three years following the end of the grant period.
- Inform sub recipients that they will be expected to comply with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations, and that any information obtained, data derived, and reports resulting from the FSMIP project must be available to the public.

- Report required data about sub recipients who receive sub grants of \$25,000
 or more to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)
 Sub Award Reporting System (FSRS) database at the FSRS website.
- Upon request by AMS, furnish any records, reports or contracts relating to the project.
- Submit 6-month progress reports, a final report, requests for grant funds (SF 270), and a final financial statement (SF 425). Recipients agree to be contacted by FSMIP 12 months after filing the final report to provide an update on project outcomes and impacts.
- Seek written approval from FSMIP under the following circumstances:
 - Changes in project leadership;
 - o Foreign travel before the travel is taken;
 - Shifts of expenditures from any one cost category or project element to another if the budget for cost categories or project elements is increased or decreased by more than 20 percent of the total FSMIP grant amount;
 - Changes in the project scope or objectives;
 - Need for a no-cost time extension if for any reason the project cannot be completed within the time frame established in the grant agreement; and
 - Appropriate use of any program income generated by the project that was not outlined in the approved proposal.

6.6.2 Reporting

Recipients are required to submit 6-month performance reports. The following reports are due no later than 90 days following the grant ending date:

- 1) Final Performance Report
- 2) Final Payment Request (SF-270), if applicable
- 3) Final SF-425, "Federal Financial Report" and if applicable, payment of unobligated balance

Recipients should submit reports and standard forms to FSMIP electronically as required in the FSMIP General Terms and Conditions of Award. Recipients will receive training regarding the reporting, quantitative and qualitative metrics, project, and other requirements of the FSMIP award.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACT

Janise Zygmont Staff Officer, FSMIP USDA, AMS, TMP 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4549-South Washington, D.C. 20250

Tel: 202-720-5024 Fax: 202-690-1144

Email: janise.zygmont@ams.usda.gov

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 RELEASE OF APPLICATION INFORMATION

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 (5 U.S.C. 552) and the Privacy Act of 1874 (5 U.S.C. 552a), as implemented by USDA's regulations (7 CFR part 1, Subpart A) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any sub recipient to permit or deny public access to their records. You can direct requests for records or the release of information relating to this award to:

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service FOIA/PA Officer Room 3521-S Ag Stop 0202 1400 Independence Ave., SW Washington, DC 20250-0273

Telephone: (202) 720-2498 **Fax**: (202) 690-3767

E-mail: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov

8.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to:

USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Stop 9410 Washington, DC 20250-9410

or call toll-free:

English: (866) 632-9992 **TTD**: (800) 877-8339

English Federal-relay: (866) 377-8642 **Spanish Federal-relay**: (800) 845-6136.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.